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not returnable by X to his wife's family. A question on this point was regarded as highly amusing. If used for investment-gifts, the presents received in return are given to X, not to his wife's relations. 556* 583

A speaker, acting on instructions from the brother or other member of X's wife's family, also announces what names, portions of myth-prerogatives, or other privileges she is bestowing on her husband. After that the people disperse, although they are free to re-enter the house, where, during the afternoon, arrangements are being made for the elaborate ceremonial which takes place that night. 556*

Towards dusk the guests reassemble and take their places as before. Part of the goods which X proposes to give away has been brought in, and, aided by members of his family, he busies himself recounting and making final plans for its distribution. As the Bella Coola have no system of writing, accurate division of goods at a potlatch causes considerable difficulty and worry to the donor. A slighted guest will feel aggrieved, and the sacred nature of the rite will have been subjected to insult if arrangements are not satisfactory. The first business is the settlement of debts by X to the members of his own village. He may perhaps have borrowed fifty blankets ten years previously from a certain individual whom he now intends to repay, with foreign guests as witnesses to the transaction. X always endeavours to reimburse with as large a premium as possible, because by so doing he displays his nobility of mind to the assemblage; but if he can restore only the amount borrowed, or the same with a small increase, there will be no trouble such as might occur should he fail to return at least the principal. When the debt has been settled with interest the matter is at an end, for there is no compulsion upon the man who receives the additional sum to repay this with interest in his turn. The amount previously lent, and the occasion, are always publicly announced, so that all are made aware of his generosity with regard to interest. [212] [578] 426 556*

In Kimsquit it was customary at this stage of the proceed- 556* 184

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(see Plate 23). So, too, wooden representations of coppers are often affixed to an upright post. Not only men are commemorated in this way, a father often places over his daughter's grave pictures of the goods used to rebuy her from her husband; wooden plaques representing coppers are commonly used for this purpose.[14] Such symbols are usually cut down after a year owing to a vague feeling that it is not proper for them to remain standing too long. The function of this type of memorial is to mark the social status of the dead person as judged by the riches given away by him, or on his behalf, during his life-time. With the introduction of writing, the Bella Coola have been quick to recognize it as an easy means for recording the wealth distributed by a chief. In consequence, signs are often painted and erected, giving in figures a statement of his financial transactions. Another recent introduction has been the tombstone. One of these is often set up with the name of the deceased carved on it to perpetuate his memory, and a representation of his crest to record his ancestral history. Such a memorial combines the functions of the first and third types.

As the carpenters labour at the memorials, other arrangements for the ceremony proceed apace. As at a potlatch, the fellow-villagers of the donor may be invited repeatedly to his house for the performance of *sisaok* dances, but this feature is often omitted, especially if there are no neophytes to be initiated. The mask to be worn by the deceased relative must be prepared in secret; or if several are to be commemorated at the single ceremony, one must be made ready for each. As the time draws near, envoys are dispatched to invite foreign guests if it has been decided to have strangers present. This has been customary for many years, but during the period when no features of the potlatch were allowed at a memorial potlatch, the latter was sometimes carried out in the presence of the donor's fellow-villagers alone. The actual departure of the

[14] The National Museum of Canada, at Ottawa, has specimens of these wooden coppers.

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to the aesthetic, their skill in dancing and dramatics is noteworthy: no one who has witnessed a native dance can fail to have been impressed by the performance of the participants and the stage-craft of the carpenters. The fact that no system of writing had ever been devised has prevented the establishment of a native literature, but the practice of passing down an extensive folklore by word of mouth shows their narrative powers as well as their faculty for remembering details. At present it is difficult to appreciate what must have been their energy in earlier times when they faced the struggle for existence, armed with stone tools. Abundant salmon gave them adequate food, but only when weirs had been built with great labour. Though game was plentiful, the hunter was equipped with nothing more formidable than a bow and arrow. The simplest task required patience and skill undreamed of by the average white man. If the reader will allow his imagination to carry him backwards two hundred years, he will realize that the mere provision of food and clothing necessitated constant effort and ceaseless exertion.

Hand in hand with many admirable characteristics, the Bella Coola display others which strike the white man as unprepossessing. A first impression is the untidiness of their houses. Exteriorly, they are often fairly neat, but confusion reigns within. Clothing, instead of being hung up, is left lying on the floor; bed-coverings are piled carelessly; dirty dishes cover the tables; dogs and children swarm over the floor; flies abound; all is dirty and slovenly. The house itself may be uncompleted; a window lacks glass and has been boarded up; the roof leaks, or the steps are falling down. Nor are the surroundings more attractive. There is one struggling flower-bed in the village, but elsewhere the houses are surrounded by wastes of mud where horses and cattle wander, dogs prowl, and children play. In the distance the mountain peaks rise in splendour, but near at hand all is squalid and unkempt.

They are only slightly more particular about their personal appearance. Dirt does not distress them. They wash occa-